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ABSTRACT

There is wide variability in the type and degree of bilingualism exhibited by persons from the various Spanish-speaking groups in the USA. Within particular subcultural groups, there is significant variability among individuals in the use of language patterns. An empirical study investigated the use of language pattern in specified social contexts among two generations in three distinct Spanish-speaking groups: New York Puerto Ricans, Central Texas Mexican-Americans, and Miami Cuban-Americans. A total of 295 families participated in the study. The Central Texas Mexican-Americans showed the greatest degree of displacement of Spanish by English as well as by "Spanglish," and the New York Puerto Ricans the greatest degree of "mother tongue" maintenance. Previous research suggests that language use are positively related. Contextual language use is an important factor which interacts with language learning and with academic achievement. It behooves teachers of persons from Spanish-speaking backgrounds to assess the language proficiency and the contextual use of language patterns of their students and to gear their curriculum accordingly. Contextual language use may be assessed by teachers through interviews and by behavioral observations, and the resulting data may be used to individualize instruction. (Author/CLK)

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WHAT LANGUAGES DO BILINGUAL CHILDREN USE WITH WHOM? RESEARCH EVIDENCE AND IMPLICATIONS FOR EDUCATION*

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Situations in which different cultural or linguistic groups impinge on one another are called "culture contact" or "language contact" situations (Halliday, 1968; Fishman, 1964; Weinreich, 1953). These situations are characterized by varying degrees of bilingualism: from the speaker who seldom uses anything but his native language, through speakers who make use of the second language in varying degrees, to the rarely encountered ambilingual who achieves complete mastery of both languages, using both in all uses to which he/she puts either (Halliday, 1968). Whereas language proficiency refers to what an individual can do, language use measures indicate what an individual typically does. Previous research (Cooper & Greenfield, 1969; Edelman, 1969) suggests, however, that language proficiency and language use are positively related.

In language contact situations, languages or language variants sometimes replace each other among some speakers in certain domains of language behavior. By identifying social domains (Fishman, 1968) in a group (i.e., major spheres of activity in a culture, such as family, education, recreation, etc.) and studying the languages used in each domain, one may determine the extent to which there is mother tongue maintenance or language shift. Under conditions of stable bilingualism, the "mother" and "other" tongues are reserved for different domains in the community, the former typically being used in the domains of family and friendship (language maintenance) and the latter in domains such as education and employment. Under conditions of unstable intragroup bilingualism, domain separation in language use vanishes as the "mother" tongue becomes displaced by the "other" tongue even in the family and friendship domains (language shift) (Cooper & Greenfield, 1969).

The remaining portions of this paper (a) describe an empirical study conducted by the author which examined the use of language pattern in specified social contexts among children and adults in their families from three distinct Hispanic groups in the USA: Central Texas Mexican Americans, New York Puerto Ricans, and Miami Cuban Americans; and (b) discuss the implications of the findings for education.

The Children and Their Families

A total of 295 children in the first, second, and third grades, and their families, were included in the study. There were 100 Mexican American children from three public elementary schools in Austin, Texas; 95 Puerto Rican children from a public elementary school in the Bronx, New York; and 100 Cuban American children from two public elementary schools in Miami, Florida. Within each of the three ethnic groups, the children were approximately equally divided by sex and by grade level. Bilingual education in some form was part of the curriculum in all schools. The Mexican American and Cuban American children attended ethnically integrated schools. The Puerto Rican children attended schools where Puerto Ricans comprised 85% of the school's population, the remaining 15% being black English-speaking students.

The average household head of the Mexican American families was a skilled manual worker with an eighth grade education. The average household head of the Cuban American families was a white collar worker with an eleventh grade education. The average household head in the Puerto Rican sample was a semiskilled manual worker. The general pattern of socioeconomic-educational status of the families in the three ethnic

samples, relative to each other, is similar to that found in U.S.A. national statistics.

Data Collection Procedures

The mothers and the teachers of each student were individually interviewed by trained interviewers who were indigenous to the ethnic, linguistic, and geographical group of each interviewee. For purposes of obtaining information regarding the language pattern used most often (in terms of proportion of time of the total amount of verbal behavior) in the home (familial use) by both the child and by adults, respectively, two structured questions were developed and administered to the mothers. Each of the two questions had four possible answers: (a) English as the single language most often used; (b) Spanish as the single language most often used; (c) both English and Spanish used with equal frequency, without "mixing," as the single most frequent language pattern; (d) mixture as the single language pattern used most often. The distinctions among the four possible answers were explained to each informant in detail and with examples.

Because certain uses of the term "language mixing" may have misleading connotations, certain writers (Haugen, 1953; 1956) have recommended that the term be avoided when describing specific linguistic usages. For purposes of the present study, however, which focuses on language pattern use, the term is appropriate. As employed here, "language mixing" refers to the use of grammatical, lexical, and phonological aspects of both English and Spanish within single sentences; it includes more than occasional borrowing, loan translations, or loan blends (cf. Pei, 1966). (For detailed examples of language mixing, see Cornejo, 1973.)

In addition to the mothers, each child's teacher was individually interviewed and information obtained from them regarding the language pattern used most often by the child in two school contexts: in the classroom as the principal medium of instruction, and spontaneously with peers in recreational situations outside of formal classroom time, e.g., in the playground, cafeteria, etc. Again, two structured questions were employed for this purpose; the forced choices and the procedures for obtaining and coding them were the same as for the questions regarding language use employed in the mother's interview described previously. In cases in which a teacher did not extensively and systematically observe the child outside of the formal classroom situation, data regarding language pattern used with peers in the recreational context were obtained from teachers who did.

Analyses

The percentage of individuals using each language pattern most frequently, by social context and subcultural group, were computed.

In order to determine whether each frequency distribution across the four language pattern categories--for each social context for each subcultural group--differed significantly from a theoretical frequency distribution that could be expected by chance alone (i.e., each category receiving 25% of the cases), within-group single sample chi-square tests (Siegel 1970, 64-68), comparing each observed distribution and a corresponding theoretical distribution that could be obtained by chance alone, were computed, totalling 12 such tests. In every case, the chi-square values were highly significant, indicating that each of the observed distributions is different from one that could be expected by chance alone.

In order to determine whether for each of the four social contexts there were significant differences among the three subcultural groups in language pattern use, chi-square tests were computed on each of four three-by-four (subculture-by-language pattern) frequency tables (McNemar, 1969, pp. 266-267). Each of these four chi-square values was highly significant, indicating that for each of the social contexts investigated the three subcultural groups differed significantly among themselves in use of language pattern. Since these three-by-four chi-square analyses proved significant, individual post hoc comparisons between each possible pair of subcultural groups, separately for each social context, were conducted by means of chi-square tests on each of the 12 corresponding two-by-four (subculture-by-language pattern) tables (McNemar, 1969, pp. 264-265). These post hoc pair-wise comparisons showed no significant differences in language pattern use between the Cuban American and the New York Puerto Rican samples for three social contexts: adults in the familial context (χ^2 = .28, 3 df, $p > .10$); children in the familial context (χ^2 = 4.88, 3 df, $p > .10$); and children in the school-recreational context (χ^2 = 4.76, 3 df, $p > .10$).

Results and Discussion

It should be noted that research using reports as a method of collecting language use data may be subject to response bias resulting from normative attitudes which may affect informants' judgments. In the present study, however, great care was taken to eliminate this potential source of bias by employing and carefully training only interviewers who were indigenous to the ethnic, language, and geographic communities from which they obtained data.

Results show that adults' use of language in the familial context was almost identical when one compares the Miami Cuban American and the New York Puerto Rican samples. In the great majority of both the New York Puerto Rican (86%) and the Cuban American (84%) families, adults used Spanish as the most frequent means of verbal communication in the home. Among the Central Texas Mexican American families, on the other hand, mixture was the single most frequently used language pattern by adults in the home (40%). In contrast, none of the Cuban American nor Puerto Rican mothers reported mixture as a language pattern used most often at home by adults. About one-fourth of the Mexican American families used Spanish, and another one-fourth English, as the most frequent means of adults' familial verbal communication. In fewer than 10 percent of the Cuban American and Puerto Rican homes, respectively, however, did adults use English as the most frequent language in the home; still fewer used both English and Spanish as the single most frequent home language pattern.

The Miami Cuban American and the New York Puerto Rican families were similar too when compared on children's use of language in both the familial and school-recreational contexts, respectively. In both the Cuban American (66%) and New York Puerto Rican (76%) groups, the majority of children reportedly used Spanish as the most frequent means of familial verbal communication. Only about 10 percent of the children in the Cuban American and the Puerto Rican families, respectively, used English, and almost none mixture, as single most frequent familial language patterns. Among the Central Texas Mexican American children, however, more used in the familial context English than any other single language pattern (45%), almost none (2%) used Spanish, 30 percent used mixture, and 23 percent used both English and Spanish.

Miami Cuban American (40%) and New York Puerto Rican (54%) children used Spanish as the single most frequent language for transacting recreational peer interactions in school. English, and both English and Spanish, each were used as the most frequent language pattern for conducting recreational peer interactions in school by about 25 percent of the Cuban American and Puerto Rican children, respectively. The Central Texas Mexican American children used English almost exclusively (89%) of other language patterns for conducting spontaneous peer interactions in school outside of formal classroom time.

Spanish was used as the most frequent classroom language by 52 percent of the New York Puerto Rican children. In the other two ethnic groups, however, very few children used Spanish as the most frequent classroom language (9% of the Cuban Americans and 3% of the Mexican Americans). The Central Texas Mexican American children used English in the classroom as the single most frequently used language almost exclusively of other language patterns (92%). Among the Cuban American children, approximately one half of the sample used English (43%) and one half used both English and Spanish (39%), as the most frequent classroom language pattern. In almost none of the children in any of the three subcultural groups were reported to use mixture as the most frequent language pattern in school, neither in class nor in recreational activities--except for 9 percent of the Cuban American children who used mixture as the single most frequent means of verbal communication in the classroom.

Results of the present study indicate clearly that even within subcultural communities there are significant differences in the language patterns used in various contexts, so as to question the assumption

often made implicitly in research and educational policy involving persons from non-English speaking backgrounds that such groups are homogeneous with regard to this variable. It is clear from these findings that there are wide differences in the language environments to which Hispanic American children are exposed, depending on the particular ethnic and geographical group to which they belong. Whereas the home language environments of the New York Puerto Rican and the Miami Cuban American children were strikingly similar in terms of language use, the Mexican American children in general experienced a vastly different environment. The Puerto Rican and Cuban American children were exposed to relatively little English by adults in the home. In contrast, the Mexican American children were exposed to English in the home somewhat more than the other groups, but also they were exposed to a great deal of language mixing. For purposes of curriclulum development, teacher inservice and preservice training, school-community relations programs, and other educational policy and development areas, data such as these should be collected for each particular target community and used, since the language ecology of the home may influence the relative adequacy of educational programs.

Caution should be exercised when generalizing the findings of the present study to different geographical regions. Thus, for example, the trained observer traveling across the southwestern U.S.A. may note differences in language patterns use among Mexican American communities depending on their relative proximity to the U.S.A.-Mexico border.

It is important to note, however, that even <u>within</u> a particular ethnic and geographical group there may be wide differences in language use; the adults' familial language use in the Mexican American sample

being a case in point. The within-group variability found in the present study points to the potential danger of making generalizations about any one group, and also points to the need to treat each child as an individual, taking into account his/her unique needs.

Of the three subcultural groups studied, the New York Puerto Ricans showed the greatest degree of maintenance of the "mother" tongue, Spanish. The Central Texas Mexican American group, on the other hand, evidenced the greatest degree of language shift, or displacement of the "mother" tongue by the use of "Spanglish" and of English, both within and across generations. There were significant inter-generational differences in the patterns of familial use of language in both the Central Texas Mexican Americans and the Miami Cuban Americans, both of these groups revealing a tendency on the part of the child generation to use Spanish much less than the adults, even in the home.

Several variables may modify language use (Mackey, 1962); these include duration of contact, frequency of contact, and "pressures" derived from economic, educational, and other sources. The Central Texas Mexican American group, which showed the greatest degree of "mother" language displacement in favor of English and of mixture, also evidenced the greatest length of stay in the United States.

Over half of the Puerto Rican children in the present sample received their formal classroom instruction primarily in Spanish, whereas in the other two subcultural samples children received their classroom instruction primarily in English. This factor may account partially for the greater degree of maintenance of the "mother" tongue by the New York Puerto Rican group. Another factor that has been cited to explain the language maintenance of Puerto Ricans in New York is that unlike most of the

other immigrant groups in the United States, Puerto Ricans in New York continue to maintain close physical contact with their homeland. The present Puerto Rican sample also evidenced the lowest occupational status and highest degree of unemployment, and this may have resulted in a lower degree of contact for this sample with English speaking institutions. In interpreting descriptive data, however, it is difficult to ascribe causality.

It remains to be seen whether the various Hispanic American groups will head in a direction similar to that of previous immigrant groups in the U.S.A. with respect to the phenomenon of language maintenance, gradually undergoing a displacement of the "mother" tongue; or whether bilingual education, if implemented on a large scale, will result in a greater degree of mother tongue maintenance and stable bilingualism among Hispanic groups in the U.S.A.

LML:TQ

FOOTNOTES

1"Spanglish," a general term used to refer to the mixture of English and Spanish, as used here does not carry any negative connotations. previous research evidence (Cornejo, 1973) suggests that there is, in fact, a high degree of "grammaticalness" in the structural and lexical blending and mixture present in the language of Central Texas Mexican American children.

LML:TQ

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